

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE 1277

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 131

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, CH, UR

SUBJECT: EXPULSION OF SOVIET DIPLOMATS

REF: PEKING 105 (NOTAL)

1. NCNA JANUARY 19 REPORTED THAT PRC VICE FONMIN YU CHAN SUMMONED SOVIET AMBASSADOR TOLSTIKOV THAT MORNING TO DECLARE PERSONAE NON GRATAE FIVE MEMBERS OF RUSSIAN EMBASSY. THOSE EXPELLED WERE FIRST SECRETARY V.I. MARCHENKO AND HIS WIFE, THIRD SECRETARY U.A. SEMENOV AND HIS WIFE, PLUS A. KOLOSOV, AN INTERPRETER IN THE MILITARY ATTACHE'S OFFICE. ACCORDING TO THE PROTEST NOTE HANDED TO TOLSTIKOV, THE GROUP WAS CAUGHT IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF PEKING WITH A CHINESE, LI HUNG-SHU, AS THEY WERE HANDING OVER A RADIO TRANSMITTER AND RECEIVER, COMMUNICATIONS TIMETABLES. MEANS OF SECRET WRITING AND FORGED BORDER PASSES AS WELL AS RECEIVING INTELLIGENCE AND "COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY DOCUMENTS."

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THE FIVE DEPARTED PEKING AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 19.

2. RUSSIANS HERE ARE CLAIMING COMPLETE INNOCENCE. THEY CLAIM TWO COUPLES INVOLVED WERE SHOPPING ON JANUARY 15, DAY OF ALLEGED INCIDENT, AND THEN WENT TO HSIN CHIAO HOTEL FOR DINNER. ON WAY HOME FOLLOWING DINNER, IT IS CLAIMED, THEY WERE ARRESTED. FIFTH MEMBER, INTERPRETER KOLOSOV, ALLEGEDLY SUMMONED TO PSB OFFICE TO INTERPRET FOR OTHERS AND WAS ALSO ARRESTED ON ARRIVAL. STORIES VARY ON SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO SEE THE FIVE. NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR WAS TOLD THAT NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO GAIN ACCESS TO THEM, BUT REUTERS CORRESPONDENT INFORMS US THAT SOVIETS ALLEGE AMBASSADOR TOLSTIKOV TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO CONTACT THEM. IN ANY CASE, ACCESS WAS DENIED AND SOVIETS SAW THE GROUP ONLY FROM A DISTANCE AT THE AIRPORT AS THEY WERE DEPARTING.

3. COMMENT: EXPULSION OF SOVIET DIPLOMATS ACCOUNTS FOR (BUT DOESN'T REALLY EXPLAIN) CURIOUS SEARCH FOR "SOVIET REVISIONISTS" REPORTED REFTEL. COMING AT A TIME WHEN SOVIETS AND THEIR EASTERN EUROPEAN SUPPORTERS ARE BECOMING MORE SHRILL IN DENOUCING THE CHINESE FOR ANTI-MARXISM, WE FIND IT SIGNIFICANT THAT PRC CHOSE TO TAKE THIS STEP AND GIVE IT MAJOR PUBLICITY. IT IS, OF COURSE, CONCEIVABLE THAT CHINESE ARE SIMPLY BECOMING FED UP WITH HEAVY-HANDED SOVIET EFFORTS TO COLLECT INTELLIGENCE HERE (AS WITNESS LAST YEAR'S EPISODE OF SOVIET EMBASSY PERSONNEL BEING DETAINED WHEN ATTEMPTING TO DRIVE OFF WITH CHINESE MAIL BOX RIPPED OFF A WALL), AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOVIETS IN THEIR ISOLATED POSITION IN PEKING ARE UNDER HEAVY HOME PRESSURE TO PRODUCE. IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE SOVIETS MAY HAVE BEEN OFFERED BAIT, AND TOOK IT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CHINESE LEADERS FOR PURPOSES OF THEIR OWN MAY WISH TO FOCUS POPULAR ATTENTION MORE CLEARLY ON THE ALLEGED THREAT FROM "SOCIAL IMPERIALISM," PERHAPS TO UNDERSCORE ANTI-SOVIET LINE OF 10TH PARTY CONGRESS OR PERHAPS TO INDUCE A GREATER DEGREE OF POLITICAL UNITY. WHATEVER THE REASON AND WHETHER INCIDENT STAGED OR NOT, THE CHINESE PROBABLY ANTICIPATED SOVIET RETALIATION OF SOME SORT, AT MINIMUM MAKING A RECIPROCAL EXPULSION OF PRC DIPLOMATS, BUT ARE WILLING TO TAKE WHATEVER CONSEQUENCES ENSUE IN STRIDE.

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4. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT WHILE CHINESE HAVE CHOSEN TO MAKE EXTENSIVE ANTI-SOVIET PROPAGANDA OUT OF THIS INCIDENT, THEY HAVE SO FAR PASSED UP OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE COUNTERBALANCING ANTI-U.S. PROPAGANDA OUT OF NEAR-SIMULTANEOUS PARACEL ISLANDS SITUATION.
BRUCE

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